

**Climate Action Committee
Meeting Minutes**

**April 28, 2014, 6:00 p.m.
Brookline Town Hall, Room 111**

Committee Members Present: Keske Toyofuku, Neil Wishinsky, Jess Bergman, Alan Leviton, Werner Lohe, Linda Olson Pehlke, Deborah Rivers, Celinda Shannon, Ali Tali, Don Weitzman

Staff: Lara Curtis Hayes, Senior Planner

Others Present: Doron Bracha, Abram Chipman, Susan Chipman, Patricia Connors, Frank Farlow, Byron Hinebaugh, Tom Kilday, Ed Loechler, Michael Parker

Call to order and approval of minutes

Keske Toyofuku called the meeting to order and asked for people to introduce themselves.

Werner Lohe ***motioned to approve*** the minutes, from March 24, 2014.

Neil Wishinsky ***seconded*** the motion.

Upon a vote, the ***motion passed unanimously (9-0)***.

Public Hearing: Discussion and vote on recommendation for Warrant Article 32, a resolution supporting divestment from fossil fuels

Keske Toyofuku asked the article petitioners to present Warrant Article 32 to the Committee. Frank Farlow, petitioner, said he was impressed with the composition of the CAC, both regards to its size and makeup. Frank described the motivation of the resolution in detail, and noted that a number of colleges and universities have already committed to divest their endowments, as well as some Massachusetts municipalities. Frank described the distribution of the town's retirement fund between the state's PRIT fund (10%) and other mutual funds. Frank said he had discussed the resolution with Steve Cirillo, particularly the very limited extent to which the town's retirement fund would be at risk from divestment.

Byron Hinebaugh, also a petitioner, reviewed the scientific background behind climate change, its rapidity, and extreme nature, pulling data particularly from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change's recent publications. Byron said the total cumulative CO2 emissions is more important than the timing, as CO2 stays in the atmosphere for an extended period and only very slowly reduces over time. Byron said that the amount of fossil fuel reserves on the books of fossil fuel companies exceeds the safe limit of what can be burned or used. Byron reviewed the lobbying activity of fossil fuel companies and noted that fossil fuel companies have indicated they do not envision a "low-carbon future." Byron said that a divestment movement by Brookline alone would not make a big difference, but the divestment movement is young and just getting started.

Patricia Connors passed around a NY Times Editorial, "The Koch Attack on Solar Energy" (April 26, 2014). Werner Lohe asked the article's supporters to respond to the criticism that the divestment movement will not affect share prices of fossil fuel companies. Patricia continued to review the NY Times editorial article, and said that it is time for people at our level to fight back against the Koch brothers and their policy to destroy the planet. Patricia said the Koch Brothers have billions of dollars, but we have billions of people, and the divestment movement is a proactive fight that will hurt them in the pocketbook. We need to tell our governments that we don't want to invest public money to support these companies.

Abram Chipman said there are number of items that individuals can do to reduce their carbon footprint, including boycotting companies owned or managed by Koch Brothers or similar people, giving WGBH as an example who has a Koch family member on their board. Susan Chipman said she supports what has been said already, and we need to take the power where we can.

Frank Farlow said he doesn't have a well thought out answer to Werner's question whether divestment would affect share prices. Frank said that if all of the university endowments and municipal and union funds were divested of fossil fuels, it would still be a minor percentage of all the shares of fossil fuel companies. Frank said it still has a moral component and a political component, supporting the Massachusetts delegation in Congress to speak against fossil fuel companies and in support of climate friendly policies. Frank said it will take time, but it will get media coverage and is an important start. Keske Toyofuku said there is some legitimacy to the argument that the solar development and net metering policies tax the system without compensation, requiring utilities to do capacity planning and find solutions. Keske said these issues need to be discussed and addressed, and this is just his comment on the Koch article.

Neil Wishinsky asked the committee if they would like to form a recommendation on this article.

Linda Olson Pehlke asked about how the town retirement fund is distributed. Frank Farlow said 10 percent is in the state fund, while the rest is in mutual funds, and only the 10 percent is affected by the proposed state law. Frank Farlow said it is up to the municipality whether and how much involvement it would like in the PRIT fund. Neil Wishinsky, Frank and Patricia discussed whether and how the Selectmen voted on the article.

Linda Olson Pehlke asked how the Advisory Committee voted. Frank Farlow said roughly 2/3 of Advisory was opposed to the resolution. Neil Wishinsky said there tends to be a lot of resistance to omitting a section of the economy from pension funds. Frank said there were a number of concerns.

Don Weitzman ***motioned to recommend favorable action*** on Article 32.

Neil Wishinsky ***seconded*** the motion.

Upon a vote, the motion ***passed unanimously*** (10-0).

Discussion and vote on whether to co-sponsor a Brookline Complete Streets Forum

Linda Olson Pehlke reviewed the other groups that are sponsoring the Complete Streets forum, and she also read the list of speakers, which include transportation specialists from Livable Streets, and an architect. Linda explained the Complete Streets concept, which is a way to design streets to support all modes of travel and ensure they have the same level of "standing" as automobile traffic. Linda explained that the state has set aside funding for grants to communities that adopt a Complete Streets policy to be used for infrastructure projects which implement Complete Streets designs. Linda said the first step of seeking the adoption of a Complete Streets policy by the Town of Brookline is to educate the public on what "Complete Streets" means. Linda said it can also include the concept of "Green Streets" to handle stormwater runoff and other issues. Linda said it makes sense for the committee to support this event.

Jess Bergman asked if it costs anything to be a co-sponsor. Linda said no. Neil Wishinsky asked what it means to be a sponsor. Linda said it means our name will be on the flyer. Ali Tali said the issue of multi-modal transportation is supported by the Transportation Board. Ali said the real problem is real estate –

having enough room to support all modes of travel, and how do we actually adopt and implement Complete Streets policy. Linda agreed, she just wants the CAC to support the process of educating the public on the issue.

Keske Toyofuku asked how far Boston is taking the issue. Linda said they have a design book setting up specific widths for road areas, etc. Werner Lohe said this seems like the next step after traffic calming policies.

A resident said he had attended other Livable Streets events, and they are lively and professional, and he recommends everyone attend the forum as well.

Werner Lohe ***motioned to sponsor*** the Complete Streets event.

Neil Wishinsky ***seconded*** the motion.

Upon a vote, the motion ***passed unanimously*** (10-0).

JOINT MEETING WITH CLIMATE ACTION BROOKLINE

Updates on current Climate Action Committee Projects; updates on current Climate Action Brookline projects; Discussion of future committee projects and possibilities for joint initiatives

Keske Toyofuku said he'd like the CAC and CAB to talk about the projects everyone is working on and see if there are any synergies.

Michael Parker and Tom Kilday, co-chairs of CAB, said a number of CAB members have expressed an interest in working together more formally with the CAC. Michael Parker said CAB's last focus was the Solarize effort, and one of the things CAB does well is getting on the street, canvassing, and publicizing programs. Michael said one of the things CAB would like to encourage people to do is switch to green sources of electricity, particularly Viridian. CAB understands that a town body can't promote a particular company.

Michael said we also would like to focus on food and how it contributes to GHG emissions and transportation. Michael said CAB has had trouble focusing on those areas because they're really broad. Tom Kilday said the transportation piece falls into Complete Streets, as well as encouraging people to walk or bike to school, work, etc. Michael said another long-term goal could be another round of Solarize.

Jess Bergman said she thinks that switching to renewable energy is great, but it doesn't hit energy use like energy efficiency programs, i.e. Mass Save. Jess said she is participating in a waste diversion program in Boston with Insinkerator to encourage people to compost or use food disposals.

Ed Loechler said CAB definitely decided the door-to-door campaign's main ask should be electricity from wind because it's an easy ask and the cost is now competitive with standard electricity. Ed said he'd like to promote Green Homes Brookline or a similar program, as well as a Solarize Brookline "continued" program with Solar Flair. Ed said that Arlington had a similar discussion with Solar Flair and had that option as well. Jess Bergman said we need to keep it a simple ask for the homeowner.

Alan Leviton said that the Green Homes Brookline program has focused mainly on single-family residential homes, and insulation is easier to do in single- and two-families than in large apartment

buildings. Alan said there are other options that are easier for multi-family buildings to take advantage of Mass Save rebates, such as electricity and lighting improvements. Alan said David Lescohier has put together a draft of his guide for solar in condominiums, and that is going well so far.

Neil Wishinsky said one main advantage the CAC has is its access to the town's policy making bodies, and it makes sense for the CAC to be involved in drafting policy. Neil said he is not sure the town's entire political structure is on board with bicycle policy, but perhaps we can try to influence that. Michael Parker asked if there are any transportation-related activities of the CAC to affect policy. Keske said his impression has been that there is a lot of interest, but no specific projects have been developed. Keske said the CAC has been interested in parking and bike policy in general. Linda Olson Pehlke said BCAN is very interested in pedestrian issues in support of alternatives for people who no longer drive and to support health. Linda reviewed the Green Streets program in Somerville and Cambridge. Linda said often people just need to try a different transportation alternative to find out it isn't awful in order to get them to change their behavior.

John Harris, a new Board member on CAB, asked why there were two separate committees to begin with. Don Weitzman said CAB is one group, while CAC is an actual town agency. Werner Lohe said it makes it a richer environment, but there are strong similarities.

Werner Lohe said one of our frustrations has been that a number of town boards and committees have not been on board with climate change, though some have. Lohe said that though Ben Chang has been involved, e.g. helping with Solarize Brookline, the full School Committee has been less involved, and perhaps CAB could help with the school initiatives.

Deborah Rivers said she learned that the town is actually doing a lot to assess climate change risk. Keske said the committee has good partners within town and would like to focus on a number of aspects: open space initiatives; a new solarize effort; condos and multi-family homes; schools; composting. Michael Parker said it makes sense for the CAC to work town connections on some of these issues while CAB works the public outreach initiative. Linda said the town has limited access to community gardens in town as well.

Tom Kilday said the amount of building and construction that goes on or will be going on within the schools seems like a great opportunity to green the schools as well as educate the students. Deborah Rivers said the funding process is already switching over to support building green schools.

Jess Bergman said having a long term plan with some short term wins would be a good strategy for the CAC.

Ed Loechler said it doesn't make sense to have separate door-to-door campaigns; they should be combined and promoted at the same time. Ed said Hudson, NY, recently contracted with Viridian for their electricity, and even saved money doing so, and we should consider replicating that effort here.

Alan Leviton said a lot of the Green Homes Brookline organization and funding activities were managed by the CAC, while the door-to-door campaign was run by CAB. Alan said there are resources within the committee that can inform the organization of an initiative, while the outreach can be done by CAB. Jess Bergman said that she agrees, but co-creation is important.

John Harris said the presence of a CAC member at a previous CAB board meeting made the meeting more effective and productive. Harris said if we want to have two separate committees, then perhaps we should have joint meetings every other month. Deborah Rivers said there are other organizations in town that work on these issues, and the CAC is made up of reps from a number of different entities.

The committee continued to discuss organization of the two different groups, communication between the groups, and where each group could be most effective.

Keske said we need to identify certain initiatives and connect people with others to work on issues they are passionate about. Alan said since the committee members are representatives of other groups they could report back specific communications.

Jess Bergman suggested a green leadership list serve, with a possible newsletter for the people of Brookline outlining our different initiatives.

MEETING CONCLUSION

Next meeting is May 19th.

Keske urged Doron Bracha to submit an application for the open at-large seat with the Selectmen's Office.

Meeting adjourned.